

New Bethel Christian Life Commission Report – September 2010

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Quote of Day

“To see Men without Cloathes to cover their nakedness, without Blankets to lay on, without Shoes, by which their Marches might be traced by the Blood from their feet,’ he [George Washington] recalled, ‘is a mark of Patience and obedience which in my opinion can scarce be parallel’d.’”

Joseph J. Ellis, *His Excellence—George Washington* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005; 320p.), 112.
Ellis is Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Founding Brothers* and *American Sphinx*

Most-Famous Mormon

Cliff Davis, Granbury, “Texas Baptist Forum—Readers Speak,” *Baptist Standard* (9-13-10).
Comments by Michael G. Maness

“Baptists teach that Mormons are a cult. If this is true, then why are our pastors and leaders—Texas Baptist and Southern Baptist—not speaking out against the mass following of Glenn Beck, a Mormon, who is tricking Christians into following his lead. Beck portrays himself as following Christian principles. But if the messenger is false, then no matter what he says, his message is false.... Or will the Baptist stance be to look the other way because it is ‘just politics’? I say this has moved beyond politics. The duty of pastors includes warning the members. I don’t want to see another Waco.”¹

Maness asks New Bethel if anyone or even if Mr. Davis *really* believes Beck will lead to another Waco. Davis’ comment seemed nearly as extremist as the opinions he is trying to lambaste. Yet, fundamentally, there are loads of issues for Baptist leaders regarding Mr. Davis’ main question. Both Mormons and JW’s have a right to their faith, as any, and claim to be “Christians,” but they are far from general Protestantism and much farther away from Texas and SBC Baptists in not a few, but many major doctrines theological, philosophical, and even cosmological.

My question is this: where is the line of distinction for you? When do we need to clarify our Christian stance from someone we believe is not a Christian, though claims such, and even seeks to use *our own* nomenclature as a very powerful rallying point for *us* (Baptists) to join them in their agenda and buy their books and stand with them in public forums? For instance, is standing with them for a particular cause *more* important than distinguishing an error that will send someone to hell? Now, I am not advocating that we can have no friends of other faiths, as I do have friends who are Mormon, JW, Buddhist, Muslim, and so forth, but when we stand for a *Christian* cause, it ought to be clear what a Christian is—that, it seems, is extremely important.

A more powerful question is harder to ask. It goes something like this—presuming the need for and a clear Christian duty to get involved in government and politics, how can one tell when “politics” is taking precedent over our Christian duty? Precisely, *how?*

News Brief – Several Comparing the Fight over Homosexuality as Mirroring the Fight over Slavery

Michael G. Maness

Several publications have had articles bringing up this new tactic. Whatever you believe on Constitutional freedoms, there are some fine Christians who believe that the freedom to believe in other religions goes hand-in-hand with a wide degree of sexuality and are both as wrong; that is, a follower of Islam or Buddhism is as lost as someone who can believe in same sex marriage. On the ethical battle front regarding the perseveration of traditional marriage and those who want to include homosexuality in their definition of “marriage,” and so erase all sexual distinction, a new application of an old tactic has entered the field of battle.

¹ Cliff Davis, Granbury, “Texas Baptist Forum—Readers Speak,” *Baptist Standard* (9-13-10), 4.

Can one legitimately claim that the rights of gay persons really parallel those of ante-bellum slaves? Well, that is not really the question, is it? The fact is that several *are* claiming such with some academic prowess that is getting attention. I believe this tactic will morph into language that will help the cause of gay rights in the long-term, especially as activists assimilate the rhetoric of the ante-bellum abolitionists. Moreover, conservative Christians will not be able to simply jettison the finer rhetoric and retain the moniker of a “thinking Christian Patriot” with simple statements like, “No, one cannot compare such.” If Christian values will prevail in this debate, it will be in how good Christians define their values within the context of equal rights for all, including those of other faiths and even odd faiths and practices, and furthermore in how Christians will take the high ground regarding the defense of the family. And part of that fight has to do with not so much forcing anyone’s definition of family upon every faith variant, but also very powerfully in conservative Christian rights to *retain* their own definitions without some false or weird or perverted definition being *forced* upon all.

Regardless—caveat emptor—this argument is hitting both the religious and secular presses, and complete ignorance of the argument will *not* help Christianity or family values.

Mosque Near Ground Zero?—What Is the Real Problem?

Michael G. Maness

Another fad that may fade soon, is the hullabaloo over the building of a Mosque near ground zero, which is causing more of a fuss than it is worth. On this issue, goodness, nary a newspaper, news magazine, religious or secular, has *not* had something on this. There is no question about Baptists being the great champions and defenders of religious liberty, but even some Baptists have fallen for a religious lemon that some have sold at their curbside stands. In third-grade lettering, you can see their signs (and e-mails; I have seen several). There is a double lemon in this for thoughtful Christians. The first lemon is, obviously, the right of all persons to build a church or Mosque on their own property, be that in Nantucket or across the street from a lemonade stand. The second lemon is very squishy and has not been talked about around the lemonade stands because it requires high school and even college thinking skills, and that is the idea that a death scene like Ground Zero can actually possess some kind of holy status in the USA, even a status more holy than a local Baptist church (as though some Baptists actually believe their property lines enclose any intrinsically *holy* ground). Worse, even a rotten lemon, is the idea that there is some kind of *holy* extension from the perimeter of Ground Zero that makes Islam particularly illegal, like 100 or 200 yards, beyond which is “OK” to have a mosque. Who thinks these things up, anyway? I maintain this squishy lemon is actually the more substantial issue, but, as you know, it is difficult to communicate such to lemonade stand entrepreneurs.

Regardless, I saw from a credible source, like Newsweek, or something (and I should have copied it, but did not think to; you have seen my opinion thus far), or a good internet site like that from the Houston Chronicle or something, that said – *did you know?* – there was an Islamic prayer room on some floor inside one of the *World Trade Center* towers?

Anyway, if you’re thirsty, I know where you can get some lemonade.

News on Ethics—Have You Heard Something?

Have you seen something in the news or on the internet relating to Christian ethics and values? You can forward it to me, and I will put it in my grab bag for inclusion here.

E-mail me at Maness3@att.net – cheers and have a great day. ☺